

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

NEWS RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D. C. May 15, 1966. A Lady Writing, one of the last privately owned paintings by the Dutch master Jan Vermeer (1632-1675), has been given to the National Gallery of Art, it was announced today by the Director, John Walker.

The picture is the gift of Harry Waldron Havemeyer and Horace Havemeyer, Jr. of New York City in memory of their father, Horace Havemeyer. It will be placed on view Sunday (May 22) as an event of the Gallery's 25th anniversary year.

Acquisition of a painting by Vermeer is a rare occurrence in the art world today. Only about 40 paintings have been ascribed to this great Dutch master though we know that he was active for 20 years before his death at the age of 43.

According to Mr. Walker, "A Lady Writing has all the subtle magic of Vermeer's art -- marvelous luminous effects, the soft texture of flesh and materials, a sense of suspended action and of tranquility that make his painting a unique achievement of the Golden Age of Dutch art".

Vermeer chose one of his favorite arrangements for this moderate size (17 3/4 inches x 15 3/4 inches) canvas which is

signed and is datable to about 1665. The lady, dressed in a yellow jacket trimmed with ermine and wearing large pearl earrings, sits writing with a quill pen at a table covered with a heavy blue velvet cloth. She leans slightly forward, looking out at the spectator as if momentarily interrupted. On the table are writing materials, a small chest and a strand of pearls. Strong window light falls on her from the left. A Still Life with Musical Instruments hangs on the background wall.

A Lady Writing is presumably the same picture as the one (no. 35) recorded in the catalogue of the Amsterdam auction sale of 1696 when 21 of Vermeer's pictures were sold. It subsequently appeared in auctions in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Brussels during the 19th century. It was acquired by J. Pierpont Morgan in Paris in 1907. From the Morgan collection it passed, in 1940, into the collection of Sir Harry and Lady Oakes, Nassau; and finally, in 1946, it was acquired by Horace Havemeyer.

The painting will remain on view at the National Gallery until the fall. Under the terms of the gift, it will then be returned to the residence of Mrs. Horace Havemeyer in New York where it will hang during her lifetime until it comes permanently to the National Gallery.

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